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XII.—*On some rare Palæarctic Birds' Eggs.*

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(Plate VI.)

DURING the past twelve months I have been experimenting upon the three-colour process for eggs, with a view to the publication of a work on Palæarctic Oology illustrated by that method. Thanks to Mr. Geddes, of Messrs. André & Sleigh, Ltd., successful results seem now to have been attained. The plate accompanying my last paper (*Ibis*, 1901, plate ix.) was executed by this process from a water-colour drawing, but the figures in that accompanying the present paper have been photographed from the eggs direct, without the intervention of an artist, and, in fact, have not been touched by hand. I give these particulars because this is undoubtedly the first illustration of birds' eggs executed by the new process which has been published.

The Plate contains figures of the eggs of the following species:—

(1) *CHETTUSIA LEUCURA* (Licht.). White-tailed Plover.
(Pl. VI. figs. 1 & 2.)

Nothing appears to have been known respecting the nidification of this Plover until Mr. N. Zarudny found it breeding in Transcaspia, as stated below. It is a somewhat rare species in South-eastern Europe, but nests in Trans-

caspia and Turkestan, and is found in Persia, Afghanistan, Northern India, and North-east Africa in winter. As a rare straggler it has also occurred in the south of France and at Malta. In Southern Russia it is a characteristic species of the Aralo-Caspian region, whence it has strayed as far north as Orenburg, having been obtained in that district on several occasions. According to Mr. Zarudny, the White-tailed Plover frequents the clayey and saline plains which surround the bare shores of the lakes and morasses of Transcaspia. These plains are to some extent covered with low vegetable growth and scattered patches of short grass, and it does not seem to matter to the bird whether the lakes and morasses are of fresh or saline water. In its general habits it much resembles *Chettusia gregaria*, but there is a difference in its cry, which it is not easy to describe. It is extremely lively and vivacious, and fond of the society of its congeners. It runs with great facility, and is at least as active on the wing as *Vanellus vulgaris*, while in the pairing-season it indulges in aerial evolutions similar to those of that species. It is also wary and watchful to a degree, and should anyone approach the nesting-places it apprises other birds of the danger by its loud cries, flying off to meet the intruder, and making use of every artifice to lure him away. Owing to its extreme caution and watchfulness, other species affect its companionship to a large extent; and where this bird is found it is impossible to stalk Swans, Geese, and other large birds, for directly the gunner arrives in the vicinity the White-tailed Plover flies over him and with loud cries warns the denizens of the morass of the impending danger.

The present species is never found far from water, and seeks either on the shore or in the shallows its food, which consists of worms, aquatic insects of various kinds and their larvæ. During the hottest part of the day it either rests on the shores of the lakes or in water which reaches up to its belly.

The White-tailed Plover breeds in isolated pairs, but, as a rule, in spots not far distant from others of its own or allied species. The nest is usually placed on the shore of a lake

or morass, sometimes close to a small earth-mound, and often in a perfectly exposed position. Not unfrequently a pair will take possession of a small islet or tongue of land sparsely covered with grass, the nest itself being a mere heap of dry herbage with a slight depression in the middle. The full complement of eggs varies from two to four, consisting more frequently of the smaller number. In general appearance they much resemble those of *Chettusia gregaria*, but are considerably smaller; the ground-colour is clay-ochreous, occasionally tinged with olivaceous, and the markings, which are commonly distributed over the surface of the egg, though, as a rule, more profusely at the larger end, are black, the shell-markings being paler and duller, and the surface-spots and blotches deeper in colour. The length varies from 1·5 to 1·7 and the width from 1·12 to 1·15 inches. In the early part of May Mr. Zarudny found both fresh and incubated eggs, while at the end of May and early in June he saw, near Merv, young birds just able to fly.

The two eggs figured are a clutch received from Mr. Zarudny, and were taken by him at Dort Kuju, in Transcaspia. They measure 1·59 by 1·15 and 1·56 by 1·12 inches respectively.

(2) GALLINAGO STENURA. Pin-tailed Snipe. (Pl. VI. figs. 3-6.)

According to Taczanowski, Col. Prjevalski found the Pin-tailed Snipe breeding on the Ussuri, in Mongolia; and that traveller has given (Rowley's Orn. Misc. iii. p. 92) some details respecting its habits, but has not described or figured the nest and eggs. I may also remark that the egg figured by Dr. Dybowski (J. f. O. 1873, p. 104, tab. ii. fig. 31), and referred to under the name "*Gallinago heterocerca* Cab.," is, as Taczanowski informed me, not that of the present species, but of *Gallinago megala* Swinhoe.

Mr. H. Leyborne Popham met with this Snipe on the Yenesei in 1895, and shot a female, apparently from the nest, but, after a careful search, failed to find the latter. In 1897, however, he discovered on the 28th May a nest of

this Snipe and shot the parent bird. Later he found three more, one at the Monastery ($65^{\circ} 40'$ N. lat.) and the other two on the tundra. Two of these four nests contained four eggs each and the others only two. The eggs he describes as differing considerably from those of *Gallinago caelestis*, in being larger, in having the ground-colour as in eggs of *Gallinago major*, and in being much more richly marked, the spots being in almost all cases very profuse at the larger end and in some cases confluent. The measurements of these eggs were 1.59 by 1.24, 1.61 by 1.12, 1.66 by 1.2, and 1.74 by 1.18 inches respectively. Mr. Popham has also given (*Ibis*, 1898, p. 514) some particulars of the habits of the bird, which I need not repeat here. On his third visit to the Yenesei River in 1900 he took four more nests of this Snipe.

On Plate VI. I have figured four of the eggs, in order to shew the variations as clearly as possible. These were all taken on the Yenesei.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VI.

Figs. 1 & 2. Eggs of *Chettusia leucura*, from Transcaspia.

3-6. Eggs of *Gallinago stenura*, from the Yenesei.

Fig. 3. From clutch No. 352. June 26th, 1897.

4. " " No. 495. May 25th, 1900.

5. " " No. 178. May 29th, 1897.

6. " " No. 497. June 27th, 1900.

XIII.—*On a Collection of Birds from Western Australia.*

By ROBERT HALL.

[Concluded from p. 143.]

34. MELITHREPTUS CHLOROPSIS. Western Lunulated Honey-eater. (Hall's Key, p. 38.)

A, B, C. Ad. sk. Sept. 25th, 26th, and 27th, 1899. Denmark.

D. Young.

These specimens differ decidedly, in so far as the eye-region is concerned, from all those previously referred to. The question that has interested us most of late is whether



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FIGS. 1 & 2. EGGS OF CHETTUSIA LEUCURA.
,, 3-6. EGGS OF GALLINAGO STENURA.